

Division of Wildlife Conservation
Education and Information Work Group Report

Completed May 2001

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Executive Summary

The Education Working Group (WG) was established by the DMT in August 2000, and met four times between November 1, 2000 and April 10, 2001. Members were Robin Dublin (Co-chair), Matt Kirchhoff (Co-chair), Cathie Harms, Larry Lewis, Kirk Lingofelt, Anne Post, Mark Ross, Brad Scotton, Roger Seavoy and John Trent. Assigned DMT members were John Coady, Doug Larsen, and Wayne Regelin. Planning staff and facilitators included Teri Arnold, Cindi Loker, Jonne Slemons and Margo Matthews. The WG charter is in Appendix A of this report.

The working group developed a draft vision, mission and goal statements for the DMT to consider (Recommendation 1). Education and related terms are also defined in this language

The Education WG chose a broad approach to its subject matter and decided to call itself the “Education and Information Working Group”. We heard briefings about existing programs including: Alaska Wildlife Curriculum, Project WILD, HIT, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman (BOW) and DWC Webmaster. The group endorsed the proposal about a DWC Webmaster position. Summaries of the presentations are included in Appendix B.

Equitable expansion of education efforts throughout DWC as well as substantially improved coordination of these efforts the two greatest education needs in our Division at this time. The Division is already offering a tremendous number of programs/opportunities in the field of wildlife education and information (see Appendix C). We feel that many of these efforts should be continued, but be better coordinated, with a focus on the issues and programs identified as priorities in this report.

We are proposing creation of a “Division Outreach Team” to better meet these needs (Recommendation 2). Our vision of the Outreach team features regional Outreach Coordinators as well as a Statewide Outreach Coordinator who sits on the DMT. The WG felt that the 4 Regions in the Division should continue to be the main delivery system for DWC education efforts. We suggest budget and staffing increments for the DMT to consider (Recommendation 5).

The WG identified and attempted to classify and prioritized major statewide education issues (Recommendation 3). We also have suggestions for improving program effectiveness (Recommendation 4) while maintaining regional flexibility. WG members agreed that although recommendations for priorities were needed, it was imperative that Regions retain the authority to determine priorities based on local needs.

At our fourth and last meeting we concluded that this strategic planning process for DWC education has been difficult but productive. Although the WG was able to sort out some of the major education issues confronting DWC at this time, there still is a real need to develop a strategic education (outreach) plan for the Division (Recommendation 6). This plan should incorporate both internal and public comments and then identify attainable education (outreach) goals and objectives for DWC to achieve on a Region-by-Region basis.

Group Recommendations

1. Adopt the following draft vision, mission, and goals regarding I&E for DWC, and several definitions relating to education:

VISION:

Excellence in wildlife conservation education and information.

MISSION:

Deliver a variety of educational programs intended to promote public use and enjoyment of wildlife and participation in wildlife conservation.

EDUCATION GOALS:

The DWC will offer education opportunities to help Alaska publics:

- 1. Be aware of, appreciate and understand wildlife and their habitats;*
- 2. Interact with wildlife safely and ethically;*
- 3. Conserve wildlife;*
- 4. Access the best possible wildlife information available for addressing public policy issues and;*
- 5. Minimize polarization between users of Alaska wildlife.*

To achieve our goals it is essential to offer a variety of formal and informal education programs (see definitions below) and use a variety of methods and techniques. Additionally, it is essential to link education and public service efforts to provide the greatest benefit to the public.

DEFINITIONS:

Education means a broad range of communication activities where DWC is a main participant. These activities include, but are not limited to: school-based conservation education, our web-based information efforts, the Hunter Information and Training program, the Becoming and Outdoors-Woman program as well as most technical, public service, and regulatory information services, including news releases. Education is also viewed as an interactive two-way process involving the DWC and its publics over time.

Conservation Education includes the following approaches to enhance the public's knowledge about wildlife and the public's role in conservation. CE is targeted to a variety of groups, not limited to the school setting. Typically, the term conservation education focuses on what was, in the past, referred to as "non-game" educational programs.

Formal education generally includes structured curriculum, lesson plans, usually a classroom setting, and pre- and post-evaluation, often directed at school-aged children.

Informal education includes other outreach efforts such as information dispersal, natural history interpretation, publications, website and other media efforts, and presentations/shows and other information offered to a broader segment of the public.

Community education includes a variety of informal education techniques aimed at adults and youth within a community. Community education takes place in a wide variety of venues.

I & E refers to Education and Information, or Education and Information programs

Outreach includes Education, Information and some Public Service activities offered to the public by DWC.

2. Improve communication and coordination on wildlife I&E efforts by establishing an Outreach (OR) Team composed of:

- four “Regional OR Coordinators” (at Range 18)
- one “Statewide OR Coordinator” (at Range 20)
- three “Statewide Program Specialist” (at Range 18), in Hunter Education, Conservation Education and Community Education, and
- Regional Supervisors should also attend OR Team meetings to recognize the priority placed on wildlife education and to help with budgetary decisions.

The most pressing need for staff was at the area and regional level, and consequently the Regional OR Coordinator positions are slightly higher in priority than the Statewide OR Coordinator position.

Responsibilities:

1. Review and Identify statewide needs
2. Review and prioritize education issues and programs on statewide basis
3. Share and negotiate regional plans to meet statewide goals
4. Meet in person at least once per year and regularly by teleconference.

An organizational chart designed by the group follows this discussion.

[[Some members asserted that the statewide Outreach Coordinator must have a degree of supervisory responsibility over regional coordinators to succeed with education efforts and provide consistent messages from DWC. Other group members believed that statewide oversight or “top down” supervision would not allow staff to address regional priorities adequately, and that a Regional approach with a statewide team effort would be more effective.]]

Priorities for Staff:**Base Level**

The “base” is current level of funding for staff. We would retain the HIT, Project Wild, BOW, and other education staffing. We would also include a new Division Web Master in the Base.

Level 1A

Add the 4 Regional Outreach Coordinators (Range 18) to staff, plus Base.

Level 1B

Add Statewide Coordinator for Outreach to Level 1A (Range 20).

Level 2

Add 4 Regional Outreach Assistants to Level 1B (range 16 or below).

Level 3

Add 5 Regional Outreach Assistants (Range 16 or below) and 3 statewide staff (Range 16 or below) to Level 2.

3. Accept the following Major Statewide Education Strategic Issues as a working model:

*Major Statewide Issues are listed below. In a “Chicago vote” those marked with * are priority programs. The top three priorities were; Community-based education, Conservation Education and Hunter/Trapper Education))*

- I Conservation Concepts
 - A. Conservation Education*
 - B. Management & Research*
- II Developing & Maintaining Skills
 - C. Hunter/Trapper Education*
 - D. Wildlife Enjoyment & Appreciation*
 - E. Avoiding wildlife problems
 - F. Traditional wildlife uses
- III Involvement in Decision Making/Public Issues
 - G. Public Policy Making
 - H. User Group Tolerance
 - I. Regulations/Reg. Process
 - J. Planning
 - K. Urgent, unplanned issues
- IV Effectiveness
 - L. Staff training, and working w/volunteers

The complete list of “Major Statewide Education Strategic Issues” with descriptions of desired outcomes, programs and ideas is included in **Appendix D**.

When negotiating regional plans for Education and Information efforts, OR Team members should refer to “Methods and Programs,” a list of successful and effective OR tools approved by the Working Group which is included in **Appendix E**.

When prioritizing issues and programs, the OR Team should refer to the “Criteria for Prioritization” adopted by the Working Group which is included in **Appendix F**.

4. Maintain Effectiveness and Quality of OR programs:

Members of the Outreach Team must work together and meet regularly to communicate needs, coordinate programs, and evaluate progress. The OR Team must demand the following values in the Division’s information/education efforts:

1. Consistency at the Statewide level
2. Flexibility at the Regional level
3. Development of programs that address wildlife management issues through a planning model. For example, **Appendix G**
4. Use of effective and efficient methods including but not limited to:
 - Volunteers
 - Partnering with other agencies, organizations, individuals, or businesses
5. Coordination and cooperation between
 - Divisions
 - Regions
 - Programs (examples: HIT/BOW; Information Education/Public Service/Watchable Wildlife programs)
6. Regular Evaluation to maintain quality and correct poor delivery of programs
7. Staff Training in Information & Education techniques

If any members of the OR Team are aware of I&E efforts or programs that are lacking in any of these areas, they should bring it before the Team so corrective efforts can be made.

The Education & Information Working Group did not identify a timeline for evaluation and review, but agreed that a plan was needed to cover several years, and that annual reviews of priority issues and programs is necessary under the plan.

When evaluating programs for quality control, the OR Team should refer to “Quality Control Recommendations for Education Programs” adopted by the Working Group and included in **Appendix H**.

5. Budget adequate funds for Outreach efforts:

Presentation of DWC education efforts must be equitable in all geographic areas of the state and must use effective tools, despite higher costs in the bush.

Proposed Budget Increments for Education Programs

Budget increments should not be interpreted as absolute and instead show a sense of relative priorities for both program and staff elements.

Program Increments

The programs are the 12 Major Statewide Education Issues discussed earlier.

Base Level

We considered base level spending to be the current level of spending. We all agreed that this level is inadequate.

Increment 11.5 X Base:

Conservation Education*

Management and Research*

Hunter/Trapper Education*

Wildlife Enjoyment and Appreciation*

1.25 X Base

Avoiding Wildlife Problems

User Group Tolerance

1.1 X Base

Wildlife Uses

Public Policy Making

Regulatory Process

Planning

Urgent Unplanned Issues

Staff Effectiveness/Training

Increment 22.0 X Base

Conservation Education*

Management and Research*

Hunter/Trapper Education*

Wildlife Enjoyment and Appreciation*

1.5 X Base

Avoiding Wildlife Problems

User Group Tolerance

1.25 X Base

Wildlife Uses

Public Policy making

Regulatory Process

Planning

Urgent Unplanned Issues
Staff Effectiveness/Training

6. **Commit to Continued Planning with Public and Staff:**

Involvement of the public and staff are vital to this and future planning efforts relating to wildlife education and information. To that end, the Working Group developed a “List of External Sources for Future Input on Educational Needs and Opportunities,” which is included in **Appendix I**.

In addition, the DMT should forward this report to staff for their review and comments.

The Outreach Team will include input from the public and staff when they create a detailed strategic outreach plan.

Appendices

- A Charter
- B 4 presentations: HIT, Project WILD/Alaska Wildlife Curriculum, Becoming an outdoorswoman and the DWC Web site
- C Topics/Programs list generated at Meeting 1.
- D Major Statewide Education Strategic Issues
- E Recommended Education Methods and Programs
- F Criteria for Prioritization
- G Using Education/Outreach as a Management Tool: A Basic Planning Model
- H Quality Control Recommendations for Education Programs
- I List of External Sources for Future Input on Education Needs and Opportunities